

Message Text

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EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LA

SUBJECT: RLG/ LPF NEGOTIATION ON FORMATION OF A NEW COALITION
GOVERNMENT

REF: VIENTIANE 2353

BEGIN SUMMARY: PHOUN SIPRASEUTH RETURNED FROM SAM NEUA WITH
26- PAGE PROTOCOL COVERING BOTH MILITARY AND POLITICAL MATTERS.
PHOUN IS ALSO EMPOWERED TO NEGOTIATE COMPOSITION OF NEW GOVT.
ON MARCH 30, RLG AND LPF BEGAN DISCUSSION ON SPECIFIC PORTFOLIOS
EACH SIDE WOULD HOLD. SOUVANNA IS HOPEFUL THAT NEW GOVT WILL BE
FORMED IN TIME TO BE PRESENTED TO KING AT LAO NEW YEAR CEREMONY
ON APRIL 15. END SUMMARY.

1. DCM CALLED ON PHENG PHONGSAVAN MARCH 30 TO FIND OUT WHAT
PHOUN SIPRASEUTH BROUGHT BACK FROM SAM NEUA. PHENG SAID THAT
PHOUN HAD SEEN PRIMIN SAME MORNING AND HANDED HIM 26- PAGE DOCU-
MENT WHICH EMBODIES LPF PROPOSALS ON ITEMS TO BE COVERED IN
POLITICAL AND MILITARY PROTOCOLS IMPLEMENTING FEB 21 VIENTIANE
AGREEMENT. AFTER PHOUN' S MEETING WITH PRIMIN, PHENG MET WITH
SOUVANNA AND RECEIVED GUIDANCE ON HOW TO PROCEED IN NEGOTIATIONS.
THEREAFTER, PHENG AND NGON FOR RLG AND PHOUN AND TIAO SOUK FOR
LPF MET TOGETHER IN LENGTHY SESSION WHERE THEY DISCUSSED THAT
PORTION OF LPF 26- PAGE DOCUMENT DEALING WITH FORMATION OF NEW
COALITION GOVT.

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2. IN COURSE OF THIS MEETING, LPF DEMANDED VICE- PRIME MINISTER-SHIP FOR SOUPHANOUVONG AND TOP POSITIONS IN THE FOLLOWING MINISTRIES: INTERIOR, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PUBLIC WORKS, ECONOMICS, AND PLANS.

3. RLG REPS REPLIED THAT BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED THAT BACK IN FEB WHEN CEASEFIRE ACCORD WAS UNDER NEGOTIATION NEW GOVT WOULD NOT HAVE VICE- PRIME MINISTER AND THEREFORE VOICED SURPRISE THAT LPF REOPENED THIS ISSUE. NGON SUGGESTED THAT IN EVENT PRIMIN WAS ABSENT POSITION OF ACTING PRIMIN WOULD ROTATE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES BUT THAT NO MINISTER WOULD BE GIVEN TITLE OF VICE- PRIME MINISTER. PHOUN DID NOT ACCEPT THIS SUGGESTION. RLG DELEGATES STRESSED THAT RLG WISHES TO HOLD ON TO MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THAT THIS POSITION WAS NOT UP FOR NEGOTIATIONS. (PHENG TOLD US CONFIDENTIALLY THAT SOUVANNA HAD INSTRUCTED HIM ONCE NEGOTIATIONS GET DOWN TO BARGAINING, RLG MIGHT GIVE UP TOP POSITION IN FINANCE IN RETURN FOR INTERIOR STAYING WITH RLG.) RLG ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THEY KEEP TOP SLOTS IN INFORMATION AND EDUCATION. PHENG TOLD US AGAIN THAT PRIMIN IS PLANNING TO HEAD DEFENSE MINISTRY HIMSELF.

4. THE FOUR NEGOTIATORS AGREED THAT IF ONE SIDE HOLDS THE TOP POSITION IN A MINISTRY, THE NUMBER TWO SLOT, I. E., THE SECRETARY OF STATE POSITION, WOULD GO TO THE OTHER SIDE. (THIS MEETS LPF DEMAND FOR " EQUAL REPRESENTATION" BUT ALSO BENEFITS RLG SIDE.) AS FOR THE POSITIONS THE " NEUTRALS" OR TECHNICIANS ARE TO HOLD IN THE NEW CABINET, THE NEGOTIATORS THOUGHT THAT THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND MINISTRY OF RELIGION MIGHT BE ASSIGNED TO THESE MEN. IN THIS CONNECTION, PHOUN SUGGESTED THAT THE NUMBER OF " NEUTRALS" IN THE GOVT BE INCREASED FROM TWO TO FOUR, I. E., TWO MINISTERS AND TWO SECRETARIES OF STATE. THIS PROPOSAL IS NOW UNDER STUDY BY THE RLG. THE RLG AND LPF ARE TALKING IN TERMS OF A 24- MAN CABINET MADE UP OF 12 MINISTERS AND 12 SECRETARIES OF STATE. PHENG SAID THAT SOUVANNA HAS AGREED TO SPLITTING OFF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS FROM THE MINISTRY OF PLANS WHICH HAD BEEN SUGGESTED BY THE LPF EARLIER IN THE NEGOTIATION.

5. SOUVANNA HAS INSTRUCTED PHENG AND NGON TO HOLD DAILY MEETINGS WITH LPF NEGOTIATORS IN AN EFFORT TO COMPLETE NEGOTIATIONS FOR NEW GOVT AND FOR PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTING FEB VIENTIANE ACCORDS BY LAO NEW YEAR. SOUVANNA TOLD PHENG HE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT NEW GOVT TO KING IN LUANG PRABANG ON APRIL 15. PHENG IS UNDER CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPRESSION THAT NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ENTERED BARGAINING PHASE AND

THAT PHOUN RETURNED FROM SAM NEUA WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO SETTLE. THE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH STARTED TODAY WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY 4- MAN GROUP (PHENG AND NGON FOR RLG AND PHOUN AND TIAO SOUK FOR THE LPF SIDE). THIS GROUP WILL REFER SPECIFIC TOPICS SUCH AS THOSE PERTAINING TO MILITARY MATTERS TO " EXPERTS" WHO HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THESE SUBJECTS OVER LAST FEW WEEKS. HOWEVER, EXPERTS WILL MERELY GIVE ADVICE TO THE NEGOTIATORS AND WILL NOT RPT NOT BE INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS.

6. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT IS REPORTEDLY SICK IN SAM NEUA BUT PHENG OPINED THAT PHOUMI SUFFERED FROM DIPLOMATIC ILLNESS RATHER THAN TRUE HEALTH PROBLEM.

7. PHENG ALSO TOLD DCM THAT HE HAD INFORMED PRIMIN OF WHAT DCM HAD SAID ABOUT CONTINUED USG SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. DCM TOLD PHENG MARCH 29 THAT ARTICLE 20 OF PARIS AGREEMENT COULD ONLY BECOME FULLY OPERATIVE ONCE NEW GOVT HAD BEEN FORMED IN LAOS WHICH IN TURN STARTED TIME CLOCK TICKING OFF 60 DAYS DURING WHICH FOREIGN FORCES WOULD HAVE TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM LAOS. SINCE RLG IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED ABOUT WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES FROM LAOS, DCM POINTED OUT THAT FORMATION OF NEW GOVT IN LAOS WILL HELP U. S. IN MAKING DRV ADHERE TO OBLIGATIONS ASSUMED UNDER ARTICLE 20 OF PARIS AGREEMENT. AS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF PROTFOLOS, DCM SAID THIS WAS LAO INTERNAL MATTER BUT HE AGREED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR RLG TO HOLD ON TO DEFENSE AND INTERIOR.

8. PHENG AGREED TO KEEP EMBASSY INFORMED ON PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS.
GODLEY

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